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The Mexican Market for Organic Products

Report Categories:

Organic Products

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Report Highlights:

Mexico has traditionally been a "competitor" to U.S. organic products. Currently, the Mexican organics sector is comprised of a large number of smaller operations and the land area planted with organics continues to grow. Domestic consumption of organic products has grown rapidly during the past few years and approximately 15 percent of production is consumed locally compared to 2-to-3 percent a few years ago. The most demanded organic products are fresh fruits and vegetables, poultry and eggs, meat and dairy products. Imported products currently supply 10-15 percent of the demand and the U.S. accounts for over 80 percent of this market share.

General Information:

SECTION I. SUMMARY

Over the past 20 years, Mexico has been a producer of organic products with most of its production destined for export. Mexico produces more than 200 different organic products with coffee accounting for over 50 percent of the production. Other crops grown are corn, sesame seeds, cacao, vegetables, herbs, fruits, maguey (a type of agave), pulses, vanilla, and sugar cane. Honey is another product produced in Mexico together with dairy products and most recently some poultry, eggs, and red meats. Mexico is the largest exporter of organic coffee.

The Mexican organics regulatory environment is very new. The Organic Production Law was published in 2006. The regulations been finalized and the industry is waiting for the official publication. In the meantime, the government is focusing on drafting the rules that will enforce the Law and Regulations. Since 2006, the Mexican government has increasingly supported the production of organics, domestic consumption and export opportunities. An annual organic exhibition is organized for the general public and a series of Mexican pavilions are sponsored by the government of Mexico (GOM) at international trade shows. The GOM also has financial programs to assist producers in increasing their production and to obtain certification.

Although Mexico has traditionally been a "competitor" for U.S. organic products, during the past five years domestic consumption of organic products has grown significantly creating a good potential market for imported organic products.

Domestic production accounts for 95 percent of local fresh organic product demand including eggs, meat, poultry, dairy products, fresh fruits and vegetables. However, since industrial production of organic foods is still limited to artisanal products such as jams, jellies, bread, and dried fruits; there is a growing demand for imported processed products such as juices and other beverages, cereals, oils, dressings and marinades, baby foods and pastas. Over 90 percent of the demand for these products is currently supplied by U.S. products. Third country competition is still limited. The local organics dairy industry continues to be strong with milk, cheese, and yogurt being sold in most retail stores.

According to the Center for Economic, Social & Technological Investigation for Agro-Industry & World Agriculture, at the University of Chapingo (CIESTAAM), organic production in Mexico began in the late 1980's to early 1990's. Around 13,000 small producers were cultivating some 23,000 hectares. As an response to growing foreign demand for these products, the number of hectares and producers increased rapidly and by the end of 2002. Over 200,000 hectares were being cultivated with organic crops with over 50,000 producers. However, domestic consumption of organic products was very limited due to lack of awareness of what "organic" meant. Over 98 percent of the organic production was exported at that time.

Although these are the latest official figures, organic production in Mexico has continued to grow at an average annual rate of 20-30 percent. Today, according to private sector experts, over 500,000 hectares are devoted to organic production and over 130,000 producers are involved in this sector. Domestic demand has also increased from 2-to-3 percent in 2002 to about 15 percent of total production in 2008.

The following table illustrates some of the "Advantages" and "Challenges U.S. suppliers face in this market.

ADVANTAGES	CHALLENGES
1 1	Strong competition from local producers for a wide variety of products
	Preference for consuming locally grown

organic products	products
Positive perception of reliability and quality of U.S. products and confidence in the U.S. organics certification system	Incomplete regulatory framework
More Mexicans are aware of the term "organic" and its social, environmental and health benefits	Increased government support and expanded regulatory measures adding credibility to local products
Limited local supply of further processed organic products	Lower income levels and general economic situation limits demand for organics to a small group of consumers
Growing local demand for a more diverse product selection	Lower production costs in Mexico
Growing health consciousness and willingness to spend more on healthier options	Regulations mirroring EU or Asian standards more than those from the United States
Increase in the number of supermarkets carrying organic products	

SECTION II. REGULATIONS AND POLICIES

In the late 1980's the global demand for organic products began to grow and consuming countries looked to Mexico as a viable supplier. These countries looked for small rural producers of certain crops and began purchasing products such as coffee and honey. Soon, organic agriculture production began to grow and was characterized by small producers joining forces to create larger groups which were sponsored by non-government organizations and social movement groups. However, they had very limited support from the Mexican government.

On April 23, 1997 the Mexican Government published in the Federal Register (Diario Oficial) NOM-037-FITO-1995, "Requirements and Specifications for the Production of Organic Produce". This NOM affected all agricultural products that were classified as organic produce. This was the only regulation governing the sector. However, NOM-037-FITO-1995 has not been enforced since 2003 and is in the process of being officially cancelled.

On February 6, 2006 the Mexican "Organic Products Law" was finally published in the Federal Registry (Diario Oficial) and since then the government's involvement in this sector has increased significantly. As mandated in this law, the National Counsel for Organic Production (CNPO-Consejo Nacional de Producción Orgánica) was established in 2007 with the participation of producers, processors, importers/distributors, universities, government entities and certifiers, to act as consultants for the Secretariat of Agriculture (SAGARPA) on organic production and commercialization issues.

During 2006 through 2008, the Mexican Secretariat of Agriculture (SAGARPA) developed the "Regulations for the Organic Products Law" with support from the Secretariat of the Economy (ECONOMIA), the Secretariat of Health (SS) and the Secretariat of the Environment (SEMARNAT). The regulations have been

completed and are currently waiting to be officially published by the federal government. To request a translated version of the "Organics Products Law" please send a request to:<u>atomexico@fas.usda.gov</u>.

In order for Mexico to advance their regulatory process, the regulations must be published. However, several issues are pending and must be clarified or defined. Some of these issues could be potential market access barriers if equivalency agreements are not reached. One is the possible requirement that certification agencies will have to establish full operations in Mexico in order to be able to certify production. Until the "Regulations for the Organic Law" are officially published, it is still uncertain if this requirement will affect some operations of U.S. certifying companies in Mexico.

However, until the regulatory framework is finalized there is still an opportunity for all interested parties (producers, certifiers, importers, distributors) to get involved in an attempt to influence the outcome. Currently a third document is being drafted, it is called "Guidelines for the Regulations for the Organic Products Law". The fourth draft of this document will be discussed during 2009. These guidelines will outline the industry requirements that are necessary in order to operate in the country.

Since there is no specific regulatory framework for imports of organic products, they are currently handled as conventional products. However, some importers mentioned that when an organic product arrives with official certification, if fully compliant with recognized international standards such as NOP and is labeled accordingly (e.g.: USDA organic logo), they are allowed into Mexico and usually some phytosanitary requirements are waived. Although this has been true for many organic products coming into the country, the lack of specific regulations and official import entry standards have created problems for certain products. For example, when organic seeds are imported in to Mexico, they must comply with conventional seed requirements.

Until the regulatory environment is finalized and "organic" products have specific regulations governing production, processing, packaging, labeling, handling and other requirements, current regulations for other food products will continue to be applied to these products.

SECTION III. CONSUMPTION AND MARKET SECTORS

A. CONSUMPTION

The Mexican market has changed substantially during the past 10 years. Although the current economic downturn is affecting the purchasing power of the average Mexican consumer, some major market changes have occurred and are expected to continue despite the difficult times. A growing number of Mexicans are choosing to live healthier lifestyles, including improving their eating habits. The food sector has been responsive to this trend and has introduced a wide variety of health conscious products.

The level of awareness in Mexico to "organic" products has also increased among consumers, although the price premium paid for organic products continues to limit demand. However, several studies have showed

that a growing number of consumers are willing to pay the price difference.

It is estimated that about 3 percent of Mexicans currently purchase organic products. There are three distinct groups of consumers that are interested in these products; the environmentalists and socially conscious groups, health conscious consumers who have switched to a healthier life style and eating habits, and consumers who are interested in the latest market trends and what is considered in style. The first group is normally comprised of hippies, civil rights defenders, and lovers of mother-nature and are generally not from the middle or upper income groups. The second group is growing the most rapidly and is comprised of educated people from the middle class who have a legitimate concern for their health and well being. They generally are more financially stable than the first group and are willing to pay the price premium for these products. The third group is comprised of people from the upper income levels. They are generally well informed and traveled and are always interested in following new trends.

Many steps have been taken to increase consumption of organic products in Mexico including the creation of farmers' markets and trade events where informational seminars and displays are presented. Today most mayor retail chains offer organic products. Price is still the major determining factor in purchasing decisions, but an increasing number of consumers are willing to pay a premium for healthier food options.

B. MARKET SECTORS

1. Retail Foods

Entry Strategy

The best way to enter the Mexican market is through an experienced importer. Although there are not many specialized importers of organic products, there are a few companies that have been increasing imports of organics during the past few years. Trading companies that handle organic products in Mexico also usually market the products. In general, the most common method of distributing these products is: commission sales, contract sales, joint venture sales or direct sales.

Commission Sales:

ore than 80 percent of Mexico's organic products are sold by commission. The trading company or the broker charges a commission of between 10-15 percent of the total price. Under this distribution scheme the producer has to also pay the cost of production, harvest, packaging, transportation, duties, etc. Therefore, the final price of these products is increased by 30 to 40 percent.

Contract Sales:

These are sales where the trading company and the producer agree to an "on-site" price that considers the

lowest and highest price range found in the conventional market. The key is to not overprice the product. In this case the trading company pays for some of the costs of production including paying for harvesting the product, packaging, transportation and duties.

Sales by Joint Venture Contract:

In this case a fixed price is set and all the expenses from production to final sales are shared equally by the trading company and the producer. Profit is also divided 50/50. These types of agreements are arranged prior to production.

Direct Sales:

This is the most profitable type of sales as intermediaries are avoided. Those enterprises that have their own trading companies tend to use direct sales. In this case a price is set for the product, ensuring the costs of distribution and other expenses, including profit.

Market Summary

Domestic consumption of organic products has grown rapidly during the past few years. Currently, approximately 15 percent of production is sold locally in Mexico compared to 2-to-3 percent a few years ago. Only 5 percent of these products are labeled as "organic" and although this is still a very small market, it represents good opportunities for both local and international suppliers of organic products.

The most demanded organic products are fresh fruits and vegetables, poultry and eggs, meat and dairy products. The supply of organic products has grown rapidly in the past 5 years with most major retail chains offer at least some of the most demanded products. Also, a growing number of specialty stores are being established and a series of farmers' markets are springing up in different areas throughout the country. Even though most of the products sold in the market are domestically produced, a growing number of imported organic products are being sold, especially those not produced in the country such as wines, salad dressings, breakfast cereals, baby foods and other non food items such as beauty products, baby diapers, clothes and cleaning products.

Organic products are being sold in three main venues: Specialty food stores, traditional supermarkets and farmers markets. Although there are no official figures for domestic consumption of organic products, the market size is estimated at about US\$70 million per year. Imported products currently supply 10-15 percent of the demand and the U.S. accounts for over 80 percent of this market share.

Company Profiles

All major retail outlets such as Soriana, Comercial Mexicana, Chedraui, Walmart, City Market and Superama, carry organic products. Currently these products are being sourced locally through companies such as Aires the Campo who also has independent distributors and The Green Corner with 4 stores located in Mexico City.

Around 18 farmers' markets located in different cities offer a wide variety of local products and some of them even carry some imported organic products.

Some of the products carried by these retailers include:

Product	Brand Name	Manufacturer	Importer	Price in pesos
Beer	Eel River	Eel River Brewing Co. (USA)	Distribuidora Promexa 01-686-555-7105	27.00 per bottle
Jam	Dickinson's	JM Smucker (USA)	JM Smucker of Mexico	30.00 per bottle
Tea	Four O'Clock	Transherb (Canada) www.transherb.com	Marcial Fernandez Alatorre 01-555-582-7395	60.00 – 160.00 per box
Chai	Oregon Chai	Kerry Ingredients (USA) www.oregonchai.com	Kerry Ingredients de Mexico	70.00 per liter
Pasta	De Cecco	De Cecco (Italy)	Marinter 1946-0440 (Mexico DF)	50.00 per box
Rice Cakes	Naturalia	Casa Santiveri (Spain)	Com., Imp. Y Exp. Vomac 5644-6512 (Mexico DF)	27.00 per bag
Butter	Organic Valley	Organic Valley	Smart Holding Mexico (Jalisco) ventas@smartmexico.com.mx	88.00 for 4 sticks
Cream Cheese	Organic Valley	Organic Valley	Smart Holding Mexico (Jalisco) ventas@smartmexico.com.mx	36.00 per package
Cheese	Organic Valley	Organic Valley	Smart Holding Mexico (Jalisco) ventas@smartmexico.com.mx	66.00 for 226 grams
Spray on Cooking Oil	PAM	ConAgra Foods	ConAgra Foods Mexico (Guanajuato)	47.00 per can
Juice	Santa Cruz	JM Smucker	JM Smucker de Mexico	46.00 per bottle
Soda	Steaz	The Healthly Beverage Company	Industrial Components www.sourcing.com	27.00 per bottle
Baby Food	Santiveri	Casa Santiveri (Spain)	Com., Imp. Y Exp. Vomac 5644-6512 (Mexico DF)	83.00 per jar
Canned Beans	Goya	Goya Foods	Panamericana Abarrotera contactanos@pasa.com.mx	Forgot to get info

Sector Trends

As the local market continues to expand, a wider variety of products will begin to be demanded. Wine is one of the products that is being launched and expectations are that it should gain market shares rapidly. The trend of consuming healthy products or products labeled as "natural" is driving demand for products such as fresh fruits and vegetables, followed by poultry and eggs, dairy products and red meats.

Many steps have been taken to increase consumption of organic products. The primary reason to consume these products is the increase in health consciousness. The environmental and social responsibility arguments are not yet major factors driving consumers to organics.

Price continues to be the determining facture in purchasing decisions, but consumers are more willing every

year to pay a premium for healthier food options.

2. Food Service Products

The food sector has also been including organic products on their menus. Although Mexico's food service sector is not yet a major distributor of organics, major high-end hotel chains have at least some organic options on their menus. Small organic restaurants are opening their doors throughout the country and are little by little gaining clientele. The products used by these facilities are mainly being sourced locally through local distributors or by direct purchases from organic stores. Some airlines are beginning to offer organic options for their First Class passengers but this is still not a common practice.

The supply of organic products in the food service sector is expected to continue to grow as more domestic and international visitors continue to request such products.

SECTION IV. PRODUCTION AND PROMOTION A. PRODUCTION

In 1995, the University of Chapingo (the largest Mexican agricultural university and the pioneer in organic agriculture), through their Research Center for Economic, Social and Technological Agriculture and World Agribusiness "CIESTAM" prepared the first database of organic agriculture in Mexico. This database was completed in 2001 and the first official document regarding this industry was published in 2001 with the approval of the Mexican Secretariat of Agriculture.

This database was last updated in 2005 to include livestock and honey producers. According to this document, in 2005, 308,000 hectares were devoted to organic agriculture and over 80,000 farmers were involved in the industry. The Mexican government saw the need to continue to regulate this rapidly growing market and published the Mexican Organic Production Law on February 6 of 2006.

The latest available unofficial statistics were made public by the IFOAM-International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements and the FiBL-Research Institute of Organic Agriculture when they presented the results of a study called "The World Organic Agriculture: Statistics and Emerging Trends 2009". This study indicated that by the end of 2007 around 32.2 million hectares were certified organic throughout the world representing a market of over 46 billion dollars.

According to this report, Mexico has 393,461 hectares of certified organic land and has the 4th largest number of organic producers with 128,819 after Uganda with 206,803, India with 195,741 and Ethiopia with 165,560.

Countries with the Largest Certified Organic Area

COUNTRY	CERTIFIED LAND	
	(Million Hectares)	

Australia	12.02
Argentina	2.78
Brazil	1.77
USA	1.64
China	1.55
Italy	1.15
India	1.03
Spain	0.99
Uruguay	0.93
Germany	0.87

Several industry contacts interviewed agreed that the total area devoted to organics production is greater than 393,461 hectares and although there are no official figures available, they estimate that the total or certified land in the country is over 500,000 hectares with more than 130,000 producers involved. Originally, over 95 percent of the producers represented in this sector were either indigenous groups or small low income producers. The private sector's participation was limited. However, this has also changed in recent years and now the private sector accounts for around 15 percent of production.

According to various sources including government and private sector experts, the main crop produced in the country is coffee (accounting for approximately 60 percent of the land). The second largest crop accounting for 10 percent of the land is vegetables, including tomatoes, corn, hot peppers, avocados, cucumbers, onions, squash, and garlic; fruits such as apples, bananas, mangoes, melons, lemons, and berries, account for 6 percent of the land; cocoa 5 percent, and the remaining 12 percent is used to grow other products including, peanuts, vanilla, sugar cane, beans, peas, sesame seeds, mint, ginger and other herbs and medicinal plants. Mexico also produces organic honey on a large scale and other products such as poultry and eggs, red meats and dairy products.

About 85 percent of the domestic production is exported. The European Community, the United States and Canada are the main export destinations for domestically grown products. One of the challenges of organic agriculture in Mexico is that most of these products come from mono-cropping areas that are totally devoted to exports which limit the social, economic and environmental benefits that this type of production can offer these communities. Revenues from organic production in Mexico are estimated at over US\$450 million.

B. PROMOTION

Both the private sector and the government have taken a series of actions to promote domestic consumption of organic products. The creation of an organics market network, awareness campaigns and seminars presented at food fairs and exhibitions and the growing use of messages highlighting the importance of a healthy lifestyle through different media outlets have increased the awareness level among the general public regarding the health advantages of consuming organic products.

Also international promotions have been sponsored by the government to promote Mexican organic and

traditional products abroad with participation of producer groups at international events such as "Biofac" in Germany and Japan and at the "All things Organic" in the United States under the brand name MexBest. The primary organic items that are exported include coffee, fruits and vegetables, honey, agave syrup, cocoa and vanilla.

As the Mexican organic market continues to expand, and the government gets more involved with this growing sector, more incentives will be available for producers converting to organic agriculture.

SECTION V. PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES

Trade Events:

VIII EXPO ORGANICOS 2009

October

México, D.F.

III FERIA CHIAPAS ORGANICO 2009

November, 2009

Chiapas México

Information:

SUBSECRETARÍA DE DESARROLLO RURAL - SAGARPA

Dirección de Productos No Tradicionales y Proyectos Exitosos

Lic. Patricia Acevedo Osorio

Municipio Libre No. 377 Piso 3 ala "B", Col. Santa Cruz Atoyac

Deleg. Benito Juárez, C.P. 03310, México D.F.

Tel. 01 (55) 3871.1000 exts. 33510 y 33490

pnt@sagarpa.gob.mx

EXPHOTEL 2009

When: June 17-19, 2009

Where: Centro de Convenciones de Cancún, Cancún, Q. R.

Contact: Lourdes Guzmán, U.S. Agricultural Trade Office (ATO)-Mexico City

Tel: (011-5255) 5140-2672 Fax: (011-5255) 5535-8357

Email: <u>lourdes.guzman@usda.gov</u>

Web Page: www.exphotelcancun.com

Show type: Largest hotel and restaurant show in the Mexican Caribbean region.

ABASTUR 2009

When: September 30-October 2, 2009 Where: Centro Banamex, Mexico City

Contact: Lourdes Guzmán, U.S. Agricultural Trade Office (ATO)-Mexico City

Tel: (011-5255) 5140-2672 Fax: (011-5255) 5535-8357 Email: <u>lourdes.guzman@usda.gov</u>

Web Page: www.feriasalimentarias.com

Show type: Mexico's largest Hotel and Restaurant show

EXPO INTERNACIONAL NATURISTA ANIPRON 2010

When: February 2010

Where: WTC World Trade Center, Mexico City. Sponsored by Nutrisa

Contact: ANIPRON-Asociación Nacional de la Industria de Productos Naturales, A..C.

Tel: (011-5255) 5665-5802 or 7790 or 6733

Fax: (011-5255) 5665-9248 Email: anipron@anirpon.org Web Page: www.anipron.org

Show type: Mexico's largest show for natural and healthy products

ANTAD 2010

When: March 2010

Where: Expo Guadalajara Convention Center, Guadalajara, Jal.

Contact: Rosa. Rivera, S. Agricultural Trade Office (ATO)-Mexico City

Tel: (011-5255) 5140-2657
Fax: (011-5255) 5535-8357
Email: rosa.rivera@usda.gov
Web Page: www.antad.org.mx

Show Type: Mexico's largest retail and supermarket show

ALIMENTARIA MEXICO 2010

When: June 2010

Where: Centro Banamex, Mexico City

Contact: Pia Cortes, U.S. Agricultural Trade Office (ATO)-Mexico City

Tel: (011-5255) 5140-2682 Fax: (011-5255) 5535-8357 Email: pia.cortes@usda.gov

Web Page: www.alimentaria-mexico.com

Show type: Food and beverage show

SECTION VI. POST CONTACTS AND FURTHER INFORMATION

U.S. Agricultural Trade Office, México City

W. Garth Thorburn, Director

Liverpool No. 31

Col. Juárez

06600 México, D.F.

Tel: (011-5255) 5140-2671 Fax: (011-5255)-5535-8357

E-mail: atomexico@usda.gov

U.S. Agricultural Trade Office, Monterrey

Richard Battaglia, Director

Oficinas en el Parque Torre ll

Blvd. Díaz Ordaz No. 140, Piso 7

Col. Santa María

64650 Monterrey, N.L.

Tel: (011-5281) 8333-5289 Fax: (011-5281) 8333-1248

E-mail: atomonterrey@usda.gov

COFEPRIS-Comisión Federal para la Protección Contra Riesgos Sanitarios

Monterrey No. 33, Piso 7

Col. Roma

Tel: (011-5255) 5080-5200 Fax: (011-5255) 5080-5357

Contact: Dr. Usbaldo Martínez, D.L. (011-5255) 5080-5357

or www.cofepris.gob.mx

Ing. Lidia Barrios, Organic Products Specialist

SENASICA (Servicio Nacional de Sanidad, Inocuidad y Calidad Agroalimentaria)

Mexican Secretariat of Agricultura (SAGARPA)

Tel. 5905-1000 x 51511

E-mail: cmca@senasica.sagarpa.gob.mx

SENASICA (Servicio Nacional de Sanidad, Inocuidad y Calidad Agroalimentaria) is the office for National Health, Food Safety and Food Production Quality at the Mexican Secretariat of Agriculture (SAGARPA). This is the office that prepares Mexican Standards (Normas Oficial Mexicana) and other regulations, as well as being in charge of authorizing new production and enforcing regulations for special products, such as organics.

Dr. Enrique Serrano Gálvez, Director General de Investigación y Postgrado

<u>Universidad Autónoma de Chapingo</u> (University of Chapingo)

Carretera México – Veracruz, Km. 38.5

Texcoco, Estado de México

Tel. (595) 952-1500 ext. 5672

Fax: (595) 952-1559

Universidad Autónoma de Chapingo is one of the most prestigious organizations in Mexico, particularly in the field of agriculture and agricultural research. This institution, about a one hour drive from Mexico City, has produced Nobel Prize winning products and is presently in a process for the advancement of organic agriculture. Located here is the CIESTAAM (Centro de Investigación Económica, Social y Técnica de la Agroindustria y la Agricultura Mundial), the organization that provided many of the statistics on organic production in Mexico.

ANIPRON-Asociación Nacional de la Industria de Productos Naturales

Periférico Sur No. 5482

Col. Pedregal de Carrasco

Tel: (011-5255) 5424-5630

Fax: (011-5255) 5424-5630

Contact : Alberto López Aguado

E-mail: gerencia@anipron.com.mx

Web Page:

www.anipron.org